

Dr. Bell Taylor on Vivisection.

The following observations were made by the eminent Ophthalmic Surgeon, Dr. C. Bell Taylor, at a meeting of the Nottingham Literary Philosophical Society, in reply to a Lecture by Dr. T. H. Pye Smith, of Guy's Hospital, in favor of the practice of Vivisection:—

Dr. C. BELL TAYLOR said he was sure they were all much indebted to Dr. Pye Smith for his address, as also for the opportunity he had offered them of discussing a subject which was not only one of great importance in itself, but which was also one which had for some time past seriously agitated the public mind. For his own part he must say, to parody Mr. Disraeli, that he was "on the side of the animals," and that he cordially detested this horrid system of cutting open living, quivering, sentient bodies, as sentient as our own, in the supposed interest of science, and he did so on three grounds; first on account of the great cruelty involved; next, on account of its demoralizing influence; and lastly, because the results obtained were so very unsatisfactory, so very meagre, so constantly misleading. (Hear, hear.) Now with regard to the cruelty, Dr. Pye Smith had given them an altogether *couleur de rose* picture of the modern art and science of vivisection; and he would not presume to doubt that so far as Dr. Pye Smith was concerned the picture was strictly correct; but they were not concerned with Dr. Pye Smith's practice, or the practice of any other private individual. What concerned them was to know what was going on at the present moment in all the great physiological laboratories throughout Europe; and he had no hesitation in saying that the cruelties perpetrated in those scientific retreats were of such a character that no man with a heart in him could contemplate them for one moment without a thrill of horror. (Hear, hear.) They knew that animals were baked to death in slow ovens, that others were frozen to death in ice machines, that they were flayed alive without anaesthetics, and that they were starved to death—handsome full-grown dogs having been deprived of food for three weeks together, until they perished in agony. They knew that Dr. Wertheim, of Vienna, killed 25 dogs by pouring turpentine over them and then setting fire to it; they knew that the same eminent physiologist partially boiled five other dogs, and that several of his victims survived for days in unutterable agony. (Hear, hear.) They knew Professor Goltz, of Strasburg, was in the habit of sucking out with a force pump the brains of various animals. Details of fifty-one dogs so treated were given. They had also the evidence of Dr. Hoggan, who told them that in the laboratory in which he was an assistant, three dogs, besides rabbits and other animals, were sacrificed daily. He told us that not one of those experiments was justifiable or necessary, and that the idea of the good of humanity would be laughed to scorn by the professor and his assistants, the great aim being to keep up with or get ahead of one's contemporaries in science at the price of an incalculable amount of torture, needlessly and iniquitously inflicted on the poor animals. Partially dissected animals were reserved from day to day for further torture, or when all but dead handed over for youths to practice easy experiments upon. But he (the speaker) had said enough, and he paused now to ask—Had he established his first propo-

sition, that this system is to be condemned on account of its cruelty? (Applause.) Now, as to the demoralizing effect. When he was a student in Paris he visited the Veterinary School, and he found there that some seven horses a week were then sacrificed in the practice of vivisection, 64 operations being performed on the same horse. The eyes were cut out, the ears cut off, the tail docked, the teeth punched out, the belly opened, the hoofs torn off, and every inch of the body fired. He said no man could do these things without suppressing his conscience, and the man who habitually suppressed his conscience was on the way to become a devil. These deeds were cruel to the horse, but they were also cruel to the young men who were taken from their mother's apron-strings, and, by way of learning a profession, compelled to take part in such fiendish rites as those. The young man was necessarily demoralized and spoiled by such an education. And now as to results, he said this practice was not necessary, that it did not attain the end in view, and that it precluded other legitimate methods of teaching and learning science of infinite more value. It certainly was not necessary for the practice of a surgeon. Surely he might speak on that point with some authority. Very few men were called upon to operate more frequently than himself. If this practice were necessary to acquire skill in operating, it would have been necessary for himself, and he could only say that he never vivisected an animal's eye in his life. He knew that his old teacher, Professor Syme—certainly one of the first surgeons the world had ever seen—was vehemently opposed to it; so was the late Sir William Ferguson, Sergeant-Surgeon to the Queen. So he thought they might safely conclude that vivisection was not necessary to educate a surgeon. Was it necessary for a physician? Sir Thomas Watson, who had been the leading Metropolitan physician for about half a century, told them that he never saw a vivisectional experiment in his life; and it was a fact that 95 per cent. of the general practitioners in this country were entirely innocent of the practice. The speaker thought they might, therefore, conclude that vivisection was not necessary for the practice of a surgeon or physician. (Hear, hear.) Had it ever done any good? If Dr. Pye Smith asserted that humanity had ever benefited by these cruel experiments on animals, he met that assertion with a point blank denial. Humanity had not benefited. Vivisection had been practiced for 2000 years, and Claude Bernard, one of the greatest vivisectors the world had ever seen, declared that "without doubt our hands are empty of good results." And he spoke the simple truth. Not only was vivisection devoid of good results, but it exercised a terribly sinister influence in diverting men's minds from legitimate paths of study. Those paths were the bedside and the pathological theatre. The men who neglected those paths in the vain hope of finding a royal road to fame through torturing animals were not only wasting their time, but preparing for themselves an old age of remorse. He (the speaker) regretted to differ in this, as on some other cardinal points, with many of his respected professional brethren; but he should be less worthy of their esteem, if, feeling as he did, profoundly convinced of the iniquity and futility of this system, he either hesitated or feared to express his convictions. (Applause.)